



Nova Scotia WESP-AC Calibration Study NexGold Secondary Wetland Compensation Project

The Wetland Ecosystem Services Protocol for Atlantic Canada (WESP-AC) is a tool used to assess wetland function in the Atlantic Provinces. It is a regulatory requirement by Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSECC) and is one way of determining whether a wetland qualifies as a Wetland of Special Significance (WSS). The WESP-AC process serves as a rapid method for assessing individual wetland functions and values. The tool's output scores are calculated in relation to a range of reference scores. The purpose of this Calibration Study is to bolster the province's numerical reference scores for the WESP-AC tool, using regionalized datasets for the various Ecoregions across Nova Scotia.

This study as whole has involved visiting wetland across each of the eight ecoregions in Nova Scotia (Drawing 1).

Phase 1 - completed in 2023 under a separate work scope and included visiting wetlands within the Eastern and Fundy Shore Ecoregions and the partial ecoregions of Central Lowlands and Northumberland (Drawing 1).

Phase 2 - is the current scope of work underway as a secondary compensation project for NexGold's Goldboro Gold Project. The work, taking place in 2025 and 2026, involves the evaluation of 690 remaining wetlands.

The scope of work was developed in consultation and cooperation with NSECC and Dr. Paul Adamus, the creator of WESP-AC, which produced a subset of wetlands selected for evaluation (under a separate scope of work). The selection was made using a Cluster Analysis technique to ensure that the chosen wetlands encompass a wide range of characteristics important to wetland function.

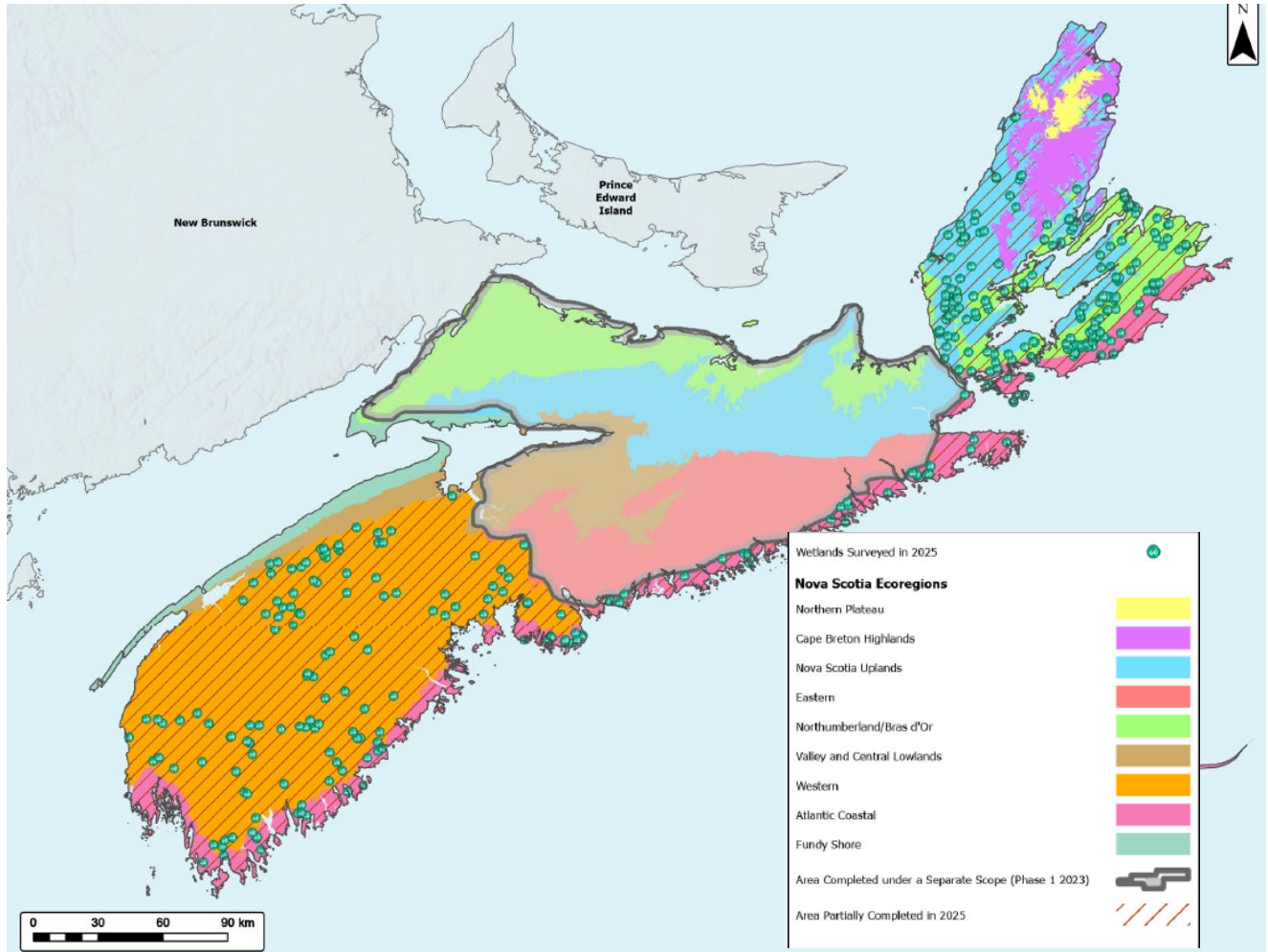
The 690 selected wetlands include:

- 130 wetlands in the Atlantic Coastal ecoregion (excluding Sable Island, Ecodistrict 850),
- 130 wetlands in the Western ecoregion,
- 100 wetlands in the Valley portion of the Valley and Central Lowlands ecoregion,
- 100 wetlands in the Cape Breton portion of the Northumberland/ Bras d'Or ecoregion and
- 130 wetlands in the Cape Breton Highlands and Northern Plateau

350 wetlands were visited during the 2025 growing season within the Western, Nova Scotia Uplands, Atlantic Coastal, and Northumberland/ Bras D'Or ecoregions. The remaining 340 wetlands within the above ecoregions, as well as the Valley portion of the Valley and Central Lowlands and Northern Plateau ecoregions are to be visited in 2026.



In support of this Calibration Study, Strum staff have contacted hundreds of landowners across the province, travelled to remote areas, and bushwacked through various terrains. The effort put into these field surveys will be combined with the results of the desktop wetland evaluations, and result in a robust dataset. Strum will work with NSECC to put together the new and improved version of the WESP-AC tool, which will provide more accurate data for anyone working with wetlands in Nova Scotia.



Drawing 1. Wetlands surveyed in 2025 in support of the NS WESP-AC calibration study. In 2026 all remaining ecoregions will be visited.